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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
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RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUCPDC/NOAA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC
RUEAEPA/EPA WASHDC
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 004469

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR OES/PCI, OES/STC, OES/SAT, OES/EGC, AND SCA/INS
STATE FOR STAS
DOE FOR INTERNATIONAL
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER, HICKEY AND VALDEZ
NIH FOR GLASS AND MAMPILLY
FDA FOR LUMPKIN AND WELSCH
CDC FOR BLOUNT AND FARRELL
INTERIOR FOR FWS RILEY
STATE PASS TO NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [TSPL](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [KSCA](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: NEW DELHI ESTH OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER
24 - 28, 2007

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ENVIRONMENT

1. SciOffs attended a National Mercury Workshop September 27 - 28 hosted by the Indian NGO, Toxics Link. The workshop focused on mercury usage, processes, and impacts in India. SciOffs met with representatives from numerous environmental NGOs, academics, medical professionals, the World Bank, the European Commission, the Government of Delhi, and the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF). SciOffs learned that the GOI has recently constituted a task force to examine how to reduce mercury levels in the environment. The main focus of the task force is to minimize mercury contamination stemming from the rapidly increasing use of compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs). The group has also been tasked to establish standards for the maximum mercury content allowable in CFLs. However, the GOI does not appear prepared to tackle mercury emissions from coal plants in the near future. Dr. G.K. Pandey of the MOEF stated that emissions of mercury from burning coal are a secondary concern and will be addressed by the GOI in the unspecified future. Reporting cable to follow.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

2. SciCouns attended the 58th International Astronautical Congress (IAC) in Hyderabad September 24 - 28, 2007. ISRO Chairman Madhavan Nair announced India is planning 60 space missions in the next five years including the moon mission, Chandrayaan I, set for launch in April of 2008. It will carry ten payloads, including two from the US. On the sidelines of the IAC, NASA Administrator Griffin met with ISRO Chairman Nair to discuss bilateral issues. Areas of

concern included the lack of definitive collaborations beyond Chandrayaan I, ITAR, export controls, and the status of the various MOUs (ISRO-NASA, NOAA and USGS) which are presently going through interagency review. Also attending the meeting was Mr. Deviprasad Karnik who will be replacing Space Counselor Virendar Kumar at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC by the end of 2007. Reporting cable to follow.

¶3. Minister of Science and Technology Kapil Sibal met with Sunita Williams and described her as "a global citizen in a borderless world as seen from space." Also in attendance were Department of S&T and Earth Sciences Secretaries, Dr. Ramasami and Dr. Goel, as well as Charge White and SciCouns. The Minister further stated that Ms. Williams is an inspiration to all youngsters in India and the world who want to follow the career paths of S&T and space exploration. Ms. Williams said she was enjoying her time in India, was touched by the warm welcome she has received, and was impressed by the enthusiasm of the young generation. She also noted she hoped there would be more commercial space ventures in the future.

HEALTH

¶4. The GOI has elevated the Indian Council of Medical Research and rechristened it as the Department of Health Research (DHR) effective September 17, 2007. Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Dr. Anbumani Ramadoss, will make a formal announcement in this regard on October 5, 2007 at a meeting to be organized in honor of NIH Director Elias Zerhouni. The DHR will have substantially more funding and independence, as well as policy making responsibility and will be headed by a technical person, not an administrative person. The DHR will be better funded and will have policy making authority. Mission's close working relationship with ICMR will allow us to engage DHR on technical and policy matters of interest

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to USG agencies.

¶5. The Department of Science & Technology has proposed new legislation to enforce uniform and effective standards for medical devices throughout the country. The GOI has also proposed to create a regulatory authority that will seek to establish and maintain a national system of certification relating to quality, safety, efficacy and availability of medical devices.

¶6. According to media, the GOI plans to establish a nationwide network of state-level culture and drug-sensitivity facilities, called Intermediate Reference Laboratories (IRLs), to increase the detection of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). It also plans to provide people living with MDR-TB access to no-cost treatment through DOTS-Plus centers. About 25 DOTS-Plus centers will be established in phases and linked with the IRLs.

¶7. WHO/India has reported 23 new polio cases: 10 from Bihar (7 are P3 variant), 1 from Maharashtra, and 12 from Uttar Pradesh (11 are P3). The 18 new P3 cases were expected as the P3 strain was not targeted in the recent routinely administered polio vaccine. The Bihar cases are spread over multiple districts and CDC staff detailed to WHO/India is in Bihar investigating the outbreak. They are planning response immunization activities for early October, including use of injectable vaccines in pilot studies. The total polio case count in 2007 to date is 223.

WHITE